

Russian River Watershed Community Workshop Summary

This is a transcription of community comments recorded on a wallgraphic at the public meeting held in Cloverdale, California, on August 22, 1998. Community members met to discuss and identify members for an interim Russian River Watershed Council. The meeting was facilitated by Paul Downs of MIG, Inc. and was organized by the following topics:

1. Responding to Community Questions
2. Review of Potential Interim Council
3. Small Group Selection of Interim Council
4. Small Group Report Back

I. Responding to Community Questions

Paul Downs and Lt. Col. Peter Grass, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, made a presentation to address questions raised at prior community meetings. As reproduced below, the presentation addressed community questions concerning:

- Potential benefits of the council
- Decision making authority
- Rapid timeline
- Funding issues
- Process

PRESENTATION TEXT:

The Council can provide an opportunity to . . .

- Develop a watershed perspective
- Create a place at the table for under-represented interests
- Build shared solutions
- Increase community influence on local, state, and federal policy through coordination
- Sponsor and monitor credible studies

The Council's role in decisionmaking will be . . .

- Based on shared power
- Developed through relationships
- Grounded on solid science
- Greater than the sum of our individual voices
- Strengthened as Council's credibility and leadership position grows

The timeline is compressed because . . .

- The opportunity to secure Corps and matching state funds in the short term ends in November
- There will be a new governor and we can't predict his priorities
- The problems on the River are not getting any better
- So, we can slow down . . . But need to be aware of the trade-offs

What will the money give us?

- Operational funds for the Council
- Study of issues determined by the Council
- Public involvement and education
- Streamlining the regulatory permit process

What is a Project Study Plan (PSP)?

- An element of the Reconnaissance Report
- Establishes the cost of the Feasibility Study and the division of costs between the Corps and the state
- Identifies the scope and schedule of major tasks in the Feasibility Study
- The vehicle for obtaining federal funding

What is the timeline of the PSP?

- A PSP is normally completed within six months of the final Recon Report
- RR PSP time extended 1 year to develop a community planning process
- PSP scheduled completion date 11/98
- Timely submittal of PSP demonstrates community support for the process
- Timely submittal is critical to continued financial support

How you can help!

- Support the Watershed Community Council
- Get the right people on the WCC
- Encourage involvement of those with the time & knowledge to identify issues of concern within Russian River watershed
- Involve your neighbors and friends in this planning effort - get the word out

You determine the outcome

- Identify local leaders for the Watershed Community Council
- Communicate openly
- Build consensus
- Define the ground rules
- Recognize the benefits of the process

- Work from a watershed perspective
- Use best science - accurate data

Where do we go from here?

- A possible process for moving forward . . .

An interim council

- September 12 can be an Interim Council
- The Interim Council will serve as a “constitutional convention” to define the workings of the council, e.g.,
 - Membership
 - Decisionmaking
 - Public Input
- The following meeting is targeted for early October

The group asked questions and made comments about the presentation:

Council Formation

- We need to move ahead and establish a council
- Develop the mission and scope of the council
- Ensure that each member has an alternate
- Identify additional funding sources like the EPA
- Determine how long will the interim council will exist

Membership

- Recognize that property ownership leads to a high degree of stewardship for the land.
- Remember native peoples and tribal interests
- Include those who care about the river, but don't own property or a business
- Remain open to re-visiting membership size and composition
- Recognize that the Eel River is more than an environmental interest. The communities in the Eel Watershed have a wide range of environmental, economic, and public interests.

Issues

- Address the operation of dams in council sessions
- Address the question “Are we there to “beautify” the river?”

Other Points

- Recognize that the Council could evolve into a public commission or agency
- Remember our volunteers
- Consider that Petaluma is not in Russian River Drainage areas

II. SMALL GROUP TASKS

Workshop participants broke into small groups and completed the following tasks:

1. Review List
 - Add or subtract
2. Consider criteria
3. Develop recommendations for interim council
 - Geographic
 - Expertise
4. Make sure Council members get to the next meeting

III. NEXT STEPS

Participants identified a list of next steps:

- Discuss visions and issues
- Ensure that sound science informs watershed issues
- Identify the parameters and constraints the council is working within
- Ensure that agencies are non-voting
- How can the council remain open to community input and participation?
- Make meeting accessible and convenient for as many people as possible

Meeting Agenda - September 12, 1998

- Vision, Mission and Scope
- Operating Procedures
- Identify Issues and Needed Studies
- Roles and Responsibility

Next Meeting: October 3, 1998

Project Contact Information:

Cathy Bleier – (916) 322-1080

Army Corps of Engineers Website – www.spn.usace.army.mil

State of CA Website – www.ceres.ca.gov/geo_area/watersheds.phtml?russianriver